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### Interview with Lee Telesco

Cecil B. Currey

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Interview with Colonel Lee Telesco, USA (REt.)  
21 July 1986

CBC: Tell me something about yourself.

LT: I was with MacArthur's intelligence--AIB. MacArthur, you know, set up the Allied Intelligence Bureau, which was composed of forces from Australia, New Zealand, the Dutch and ourselves and the Australian-New Zealand group had the New Guinea area in which they set up coast watcher stations. The Philippine sub-section of AIB had the Philippines. It was then that we started making contact with their forces and sending in submarines with intelligence personnel.

CBC: Like her (Dorothy Bohannon's) husband, who came in by submarine?

LT: Yes, and also by aircraft, but that was much later. Yes, but that is what it was. The teams were set up . . . (telephone call interrupts)

. . . And we started to send out the teams to work with the guerrillas and also the intelligence teams were very small groups of 4-5 and they worked as teams and lived off the land in various areas of the Philippines from all the way down to the Sulu archipelago, the island of 'parawan', Mindanao, Panay, and all the other islands.

CBC: How successful were they?

LT: Very successful.

CBC: High casualty rate?

LT: No. We had no casualties. The only casualties we had was when we placed 17 of our intelligence personnel on the Sea Wolf, the submarine Sea Wolf, and it was depth bombed by one of our aircraft by mistake. That was our only casualty.

CBC: You ought to be able to give me some good insight as to why Douglas MacArthur was so adamant about allowing OSS to work in the Pacific theater.

LT: He would not allow it.

CBC: I know. Why?

LT: He felt that OSS --their orders were coming out of Washington and he would not allow that. If he ran a theater, he didn't want orders coming from somewhere else. That's the reason why he would not have OSS; he set up his own with General Willoughby and Courtney Whitney. There was always a feud going on between Willoughby and Whitney because Willoughby was Chief of Staff and Whitney was on the official staff but in charge of the Philippine subdivision of the AIB. So there was always a feud going because Willoughby felt that since he was in charge, he should have direct charge of all these teams that were going out. (Telephone call interrupts.)

So that was it. MacArthur wanted to run his own show.



LT: That was the time, you know there was a lot of covert work going on at that time. I can remember during the Korean episode, the intelligence unit that was in Tokyo was so good it could take any document and put a man in the uniform, the Chinese uniform, and send him across the Yalu because he either spoke fluent Russian or Chinese and he fit the character. If he looked Chinese, he was Chinese, altho he was a member of the intelligence corps. So I know they were making these frequent inroads into China during World War II. That's what the story was.

CBC: Lansdale would have been hard to disguise as a Chinese.

LT: No, no, no. He would never have been disguised as a Chinese. No, I didn't mean it in that . . .

CBC: I understand; I was making a joke; and of course, during World War II, China was our ally, and he could just have gone in as Ed Lansdale.

LT: Sure. sure.

CBC: Or as Peter Rabbit. Jack Rabbit, you know?

LT: Yeah, whatever name he wanted to assume. That's right. That's true.

CBC: Do you remember anything else that happened the day you met Ed.? You know, try to reflect back . . .

LT: No, no, the only thing I can remember is that he came in to the office on Queens Street and said that he had an appointment to see Allison Ind. And I said I'd be happy to take . . . and I took him and introduced to Allison.

CBC: So you were working there at the time?

LT: Yes, I was there at the time, for a period there.

CBC: Did you stay around during the conversation?

LT: No I didn't. I excused myself for I didn't feel it was proper, you know what I mean? I wasn't invited to stay, so . . . That was a hell of a long time ago.

CBC: O.K. So you got to know Ed pretty well.

LT: Yes. Later I got to know Ed real well. Yes, yes, absolutely.

CBC: What was your capacity here in the Philippines during the time of the Huk rebellion?

LT: I was here. I had gotten out of the service and had kept my reserve commission active, you know what I mean, and did my reserve duty each year.

CBC: Now at that time you would have been in the United States Army.



CBC: Someone has suggested that when Ed Lansdale showed up in this theater that he was an OSS mole.

LT: That's right. He was a CIA type; I mean a prototype, for OSS after the war became CIA.

CBC: Yes, but while it was still OSS, Ed Lansdale worked for OSS and some thought that by sending him to the Philippines, they were getting OSS in despite MacArthur's objections.

LT: Yes, yes, that's right, but that never grew beyond Lansdale and Bo; that never grew any further. If it did, we were not knowledgeable about it, and we would have, for we were in charge of all the submarines. The submarine base was in Darwin and then later it moved up to Windy Island which was right off the island of 'Peac.' So we did know what went on at all times.

CBC: You know, it's very interesting . . . .

LT: Both Ed and Bo made a great contribution because hell, they were moving in and out, they both knew exactly what was going on.

CBC: By the end of the war, Lansdale had run a survey of quite a number of the islands around here.

LT: And then, of course, Ed was quite active, as was Bo, in the early days of the Vietnam show. I remember when Ed was in Saigon and DaNang and the other areas.

CBC: How did you come to meet Lansdale?

LT: I met Ed Lansdale in Brisbane, Australia.

CBC: You did? When? Tell me about it.

LT: No, I can't exactly tell you the dates when I did, because I was coming in and out of the Philippines, but it was in '43 if I'm not mistaken. '43 or '44, I can't remember the exact date. I'd have to look through some old files.

Dorothy laughs and says: First Ed said he'd been to Australia and then later he made the statement he'd never been to Australia.

LT: Yes, he was in Australia, I remember that. He was in Australia. He may not have wanted to let us know he was in Australia.

CBC: Tell me as much as you can about this.

LT: Well, all I can remember is that I met him . . . AIB headquarters were on Queens Street in Brisbane and I can remember him coming in and he was talking with uh, o.k., just a moment now, it was in my mind and I just forgot his name, he was the executive officer for the AIB. Allison! Allison Ind. A-l-l-i-s-o-n, and his last name was Ind--I-n-d. Allison Ind. I remember that. Yeah, Allison Ind. He had come in to



talk with Allison. And he introduced me. Allison introduced me.

CBC: Pin down the time as much as you can.

LT: To the best of my recollection, it could have been either in October or November of 1943. Now, of course, Ed may not want . . . (laughs). But I know he did come in to see Allison Ind. Now, unfortunately, Allison died.

CBC: How long was he there? Do you have any idea?

LT: I don't recall how long he was there. That I couldn't say.

CBC: Was it a matter of hours? a matter of days?

LT: No, no, it was a matter of days. It couldn't have been a matter of hours.

CBC: It was not a matter of weeks?

LT: No, no, I don't think it was, but he was there, I know that.

CBC: In '43?

LT: In '43 as nearly as I can get it.

CBC: Do you know anything about a trip he might have taken to China?

LT: There was a trip to China that Allison told me they were going to make, but I have no details about how that trip went off, but I did hear that there was a trip going into China. Right.

CBC: With Lansdale?

LT: Right.

Dorothy Bohannon: Now Ind has written some books.

LT: Ind has written some books.

DB: We have one

LT: You have one of these books?

DB: Right.

LT: Could be in one of Allison Ind's books. I had a copy of it and lent it to somebody . . . It never came back. Now I can remember there was some talk of someone going into China and I believe it was Lansdale if I'm not mistaken.

DB laughs.

CBC: I'm glad I came up to see you, sir.



LT: That was the time, you know there was a lot of covert work going on at that time. I can remember during the Korean episode, the intelligence unit that was in Tokyo was so good it could take any document and put a man in the uniform, the Chinese uniform, and send him across the Yalu because he either spoke fluent Russian or Chinese and he fit the character. If he looked Chinese, he was Chinese, altho he was a member of the intelligence corps. So I know they were making these frequent inroads into China during World War II. That's what the story was.

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CBC: What was your capacity here in the Philippines during the time of the Huk rebellion?

LT: I was here. I had gotten out of the service and had kept my reserve commission active, you know what I mean, and did my reserve duty each year.

CBC: Now at that time you would have been in the United States Army.



LT: No, no, I'm an American and so I kept my commission active. I left the armed forces in 1948. And then I worked in San Miguel that whole time.

CBC: When Lansdale came back to the Philippines to help Magsaysay about 1949, what was your impression of him as an operative?

LT: Oh, I thot he was a very fine operative.

CBC: Why?

LT: Why? Because he knew. . . well, that's a hard one to define, I think he was a good man who knew exactly what he was doing, because he had access to Magsaysay and to other areas of the Philippines and he could go into these areas where the Huks were actually based. In the beginning, you know, the Huks were up in the Sierra Nevada mountains because when we sent a team, when we landed a submarine on 'Polivio' island and 'Pompangbom' with the group leader and they had to cross from the Pacific ocean side over to the Lingayen gulf over the Sierra Madre mountains, they had to pay off the Huks in order to be able to cross they had to give them guns and ammunition and supplies they were carrying with them. And Ed had access to those areas when he came in.

CBC: But how?

LT: How? Don't forget Ed worked with the whats-his-name who died, was married to the Araneta woman.

CBC: Napoleon Valeriano.

LT: Yeah, Valeriano. He had contats with Valeriano and with the armed forces and he worked very closely with the Philippine Armed forces and that's how he got into those areas thru the cooperation of the armed forces.

CBC: Well, he tells about wandering around by himself. . . .

(Omit lengthy statement by cbc with occasional interjections from LT)

Omit lengthy statement by LT on modern conditions.

CBC: What are some other things that you think made him a good operator?

LT: I think, primarily, because he was daring and unafraid and this is the principal of a good leader, a man who can wander into these areas unafraid of what is going to happen to him and knowing that by his kindness and by the manner in which he conducts himself that he is going to be accepted.

(telephone interrupt)

CBC lengthy question about Ed's lack of linguistics.



LT: He doesn't have to; it's the manner in which you approach people .  
. . . (omit part of answer).

Omit more of interchange about languages.

Omit part of what were you doing during 1951 election.

Omit more about languages.

Much material omitted, none seemingly consequential.

LT: In your research on Lansdale, does the name John Richardson come up?

CBC: I don't think so.

LT: In 1963, when Diem was president of SVN, JR -- and this is not for the record, for I wouldn't want to say--JR was CIA chief and as you'll recall, there was a coup d'etat and Diem was assassinated. I don't know whether Ed had anything to do with that?

CBC's answer omitted.

LT comment omitted.

LT: I had interviewed Ngo Dinh Nhu the day before and then suddenly I get a call from John Richardson saying don't leave your hotel tomorrow morning, I was in the Caravel Hotel, I can't tell you why, just don't leave, and then the coup took place.

material omitted.